GOVDOC
BCA
2835

BOSTON
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
Boston Public Library

http://www.archive.org/details/twospecialreport00shur

FRANKLIN PARK COALITION BULLETIN

yn. 91-598

Sept., 1981

A publication of the Franklin Park Coalition
319 Forest Hills St., Boston, MA. 02130 • 522-7431

Government Document
BRA
2835

1925 Special Report Review of the Boston Park System

by Arthur Shurcliff

Shurtleff

Property Of
BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Library

TWO SPECIAL REPORTS OF THE PARKS DEPARTMENT 1924 and 1925

The Development of the Park System

The Future Development of the Park and Playground System

INTRODUCTION

The Franklin Park Coalition often speaks of bringing Franklin Park into the 20th Century. This means control of motor vehicles. The two Special Reports abridged in this issue of the Bulletin also address the need to relate Olmsted's 19th c. park system to 20th century American life. It includes detailed discussion on how to plan for motor vehicles. The problems of 1925 are much the same as of 1981 with the glaring exception that motor vehicles dominate all facets of American life today.

Mayor James M. Curley's several administrations are noted for the building of many neighborhood playgrounds throughout the city, the famous Rose Gardens in the Back Bay Fens and Franklin Park and for the first public golf course in the city in Franklin Park (built in two stages 1915 and 1922). Mayor Curley took the opportunity of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Boston Park Department to request that special studies be made on the condition of the Park System (first planned when Curley was one year old.) and a study on the future needs of the Parks.*

The Park Department turned to Arthur A. Shurtleff, Landscape Architect, to write both reports. Shurtleff had been working for the Park Department on various projects for 14 years beginning with the Franklin Park Zoo of 1911. Arthur Shurtleff continued Olmsted's work on the Boston Park System by carefully and sensitively changing the System to meet demands for motor vehicles and active sports. The Back Bay Fens as we know it today is more Arthur Shurtleff than Frederick Law Olmsted. The construction of the Charles River Dam in 1910 ended the salt water marsh which Olmsted had carefully designed in the Fens. Shurtleff in the teens and twenties redesigned the Fens into a fresh water parkland. He also made the Museum of Fine Arts Evans wing fit well with the Park by designing the lawn and oval lagoon which set off and mirror the long colonnade of the MFA.

Arthur Shurtleff was born on September 19, 1870, a contemporary of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., also born in 1870. Shurtleff's father was an inventor and manufacturer of surgical instruments in Boston who wanted his son to be a mechanical engineer. Young Arthur tried this field at M.I.T. but a deep interest in country scenery (born from vacation trips around

*It is unfortunate that the centennial of the Boston Park Department was completely ignored in 1975 during the Bicentennial celebrations.

New England) led him to study landscape architecture. This profession was rapidly gaining popularity due to the publicity of the Chicago World's Fair (landscaped by Olmsted) and through the writings of Olmsted and Charles Eliot.

In 1896 he entered the Olmsted office as an apprentice and then an employee. He stayed there until 1905 when he opened his own practice. In 1900 with Frederick Law Olmsted Senior and H. Langford Warren, he began the School of Landscape Architecture at Harvard, the country's first 4 year landscape architecture school.

Shurtleff's career was long and varied. He became famous for his outstanding work at the Colonial Williamsburg Restoration in the 1920's. In Boston his design for the Charles River Esplannade in 1935 gave Boston one of its finest parklands and one of its most important landmarks. Shurtleff's work carried to completion the concepts of his friend Charles Eliot who, in the early 1890's, was the first to begin work towards the reclamation of the Charles River Basin.

In the Olmsted Park System, Shurtleff relandscaped much of the Fens including the first footbridges in the southern basin. The ballfield, fieldhouse and bleachers are his design also. The widening and rebuilding of the Parkway system including the 3 rotaries in Jamaica Plain are his work. (He alludes to this in his reports.) In Franklin Park was his fine Zoo plan which is currently being destroyed for the new Zoo.*

Shurtleff was well aware that although change in urban parks was inevitable, it nonetheless must be planned and should not be permitted to destroy the fabric of the older parks.

> "A very heavy responsibility rests upon anyone who may propose to modify the design of [Franklin Park], which was planned after devoted study by the greatest master of landscape architecture."

Considerable attention was devoted in the reports to traffic; the section on the Parkways is the most important in the 1925 Report. In his recommendations, however, Shurtleff repeats that although rebuilding of the Park drives and parkways are necessary,

> "[they should] not go beyond limits which would jeopardize the value of the park for general recreative use or interfere with the enjoyment of its landscapes by the distraction of moving vehicles and by noise."

Arthur Shurtleff died in November of 1957, the same year as his friend, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

Richard Heath
July, 1981

*The subject of the November Bulletin will be the Franklin Park Zoo Reports.

BOSTON, December 1, 1924

Hon. James M. Curley,
Mayor of the City of Boston

DEAR SIR. - The Park Department submits the following report which reviews the relation of the Park System to recent park developments. The report also describes important plans which are now under construction or which are to be carried out in the near future in the Fens, at the Zoo, at Castle Island, in the newer playgrounds and at Columbus Park and elsewhere.* Inquiries are constantly made of this Department regarding the future development proposed for the open spaces of the City, and the parks and playgrounds included in this report have been the subjects of special public interest. This review of the plans and the purposes of the Department will assist in giving desired information in convenient form, and will also make a useful permanent record for future reference.

The Department is making good progress with a special report on the future development of the Park and Playground System of the City. This material is being studied with the growth of the industrial areas and the residence areas, in order to make an intelligent forecase of the probable needs of the next quarter to half a century.

Respectfully submitted,

James B. Shea, Chairman.
Charles A. Coolidge, Commissioner**
Myron P. Lewis, Commissioner.
William P. Long, Deputy Commissioner.
Daniel J. Byrne, Secretary and Chief Clerk.
Arthur A. Shurtleff, Landscape Archetect.

* Castle Island and Columbus Park, both in South Boston, are not included in this reprint (ed.).

** Coolidge, with George Shepley and George Rutan, formed Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge to carry on the work of H.H. Richardson who died in 1886, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge did considerable work in the Park System.

THE BOSTON PARK SYSTEM

The Boston Parks deserve the term of "System," first because they are physically connected by an unbroken string of wide and attractive connecting parkways which lead from the Common at one extremity to City Point at the other terminus; second, the term is appropriate because these open spaces are laid out in a single style without conspicuous breaks of design which would tend to divide the string into sections of different type; third, the local parks and playgrounds which are by necessity detached from this string are distributed methodically to provide, as far as possible, equal recreation opportunities in the outlying sections of the City.

Though this system may be complete today, it cannot remain so in the future without the constant acquisition of new park and playground areas or the improvement of old areas. The constant growth of the City makes this growth of the System necessary. This is not a theory upon which the City might be urged to act, but it is a fact upon which the City is constantly acting, and with special energy at the present day. There never was a time when new playgrounds were being more rapidly acquired and old playgrounds more generally enlarged and improved in their facilities than at the present time.

The parks of Boston are rendered still more perfect as a System and more useful individually through their relation to the outer ring of Metropolitan Parks and parkways which were developed after the Boston Parks were established. Each system is becoming yearly more essential to the other. The question at once arises, have these recreative facilities reached a point of development in which one group is duplicating the work of other groups? A general examination of the actual use made of these parks on Sundays and holidays, as well as on week days, indicates they are all in intensive use. Many of them, like the bathing beaches and the ball field areas, are unable to accommodate the throngs which seek them. There are no idle parks or playgrounds. In the winter season, it is true, greater use might be made of the wooded reservations and the larger country parks by snowshoers, trampers and "nature study" parties. This is a problem of education. In the summer season, however, the call to the parks is natural and constant. The present need is to bring the parks nearer to the homes by creating more recreation areas in the residence districts. The doorsteps and the streets will continue always to serve as play spaces on certain days, at certain hours, and at certain periods in childhood and in old age, but the playground and the park will be a public necessity always.

Transportation will probably never provide such rapid and such cheap transit that the families of one neighborhood will go by preference to distant neighborhoods for playgrounds. Consequently there appears to be no immediate danger of duplication of local playgrounds. With regard to the large country parks which should be spaced widely, a duplication

might occur if they were placed near together, but at present there is no chance that such a liberal supply of these desirable open spaces could be afforded. If our climate were more bitter and the waters of our shores very cold, we might soon possess too many bathing beaches in a combination of the Boston and the Metropolitan Systems, but with our present climate and with our population of enthusiastic bathers, the hot weather crowds overtax all the public beaches, and trespass upon the private beaches from Plymouth to Portland. In the case of special recreative features like zoological parks, special collections of plants or flowers, great public stadiums, duplication may be possible in the future, but at present the opportunities for special study or amusement afforded by these examples are still short of the capacity of Boston and the district to enjoy.

The Department, at the request of his Honor Mayor Curley, is now making a detailed study of the future development of the local parks and playgrounds ofBoston. This study will indicate the districts in which additional facilities of this kind are now needed, or in which they will be needed in the future if the growth of the City continues at the present rate. The study will also consider in greater detail the relation of all the recreative facilities of the district to the population of the City.

The relations between the Park Department and the City of Boston Planning Board have been very helpful. In determining the locations for future playgrounds, the help of the Planning Board has been especially important. Evidently playgrounds and other recreation areas should be placed where they will not interfere with the future local street extensions or with main thoroughfares. Similarly it has been possible with a degree of confidence to secure the abandonment of streets which have heretofore separated parcels of playground area and thus unite them in a single tract, as in the instances of the Christopher Gibson and John A. Doherty Playgrounds.*

THE FENS PLAYGROUND

The extraordinary growth of schools, colleges and other educational institutions near the Fens, between Brookline Avenue and the Art Museum, has brought thousands of pupils into a region which is well equipped with park areas, but which has lacked playground space especially for school games of baseball and football. When the first schools were built, the pupils used vacant lots on the upland for their sports. Subsequently when the low wet land of the Fens was reclaimed from salt marsh, this flat ground, although intended for park lawns and for tree and shrubbery areas,

*In Dorchester; these two playgrounds were combined into Town Field in Fields Corner section of Dorchester.

was eagerly sought by the schools for ball fields. These demands upon the park became more frequent and more urgent as the number of schools increased. As time passed, it became apparent both that some permanent provision should be made for these playground activities, and that these play spaces should not be allowed to preempt so great a portion of the park as to change its landscape character. In the neighborhood between Simmons College and Jersey Street the demand for ball fields had already required a resurfacing of the ground, and it became evident that this play area was destined, unless organized, to destroy the shrubbery and grass areas further east toward the Art Museum. The Park Department therefore decided to develop the western portion of this area to accomodate two regulation baseball diamonds, and to define this tract definitely for such use by fences, marginal plantations, and border walks. Beyond these limits, the park landscapes were to be restored and developed in accordance with a carefully studied general plan.

The first steps toward a realization of this improvement are now under way. Ground within the space reserved for playground purposes has been graded. The surrounding plantations of trees and shrubbery, which will give shade and hide the necessary back nets and other structures of the field, will be installed. To avoid the unsightly appearance of temporary wooden grandstands and to meet the pressing demand for spectators' benches, the Department is constructing permanent concrete bleachers of good design. The height of this structure is limited, however, to five rows of seats in order to prevent it from interfering with views across the Fens from roadway to roadway. A field house of low height is to be built against the bleachers where it will be as inconspicuous as possible. Within the building public toilets will be built, and a limited number of lockers and shower baths will be installed. All these constructions and the back nets are to be hidden as fully as possible by vines, high-growing kinds of shrubbery, and by low-branching trees.

The public footways of the park are to be carried around the marginal screening plantations of the playground. Therefore, to pleasure seekers wishing to enjoy the landscapes of the park, the playground activities will not distract attention from the river, and from the reasonably ample borders of sedgy ground, grass land, and the slopes rising to the roadway.

PROPOSED FENS IMPROVEMENT OPPOSITE THE ART MUSEUM

Reference has been made both to the need of providing playground space in the western section of the Fens, and to the desirability of developing adjacent portions in a park-like manner in keeping with the landscape ideals of the Park System. A start is to be made toward the general landscape improvement of the Fens, by the development of the tract

opposite the Art Museum. Recognition of this building is possible in the design of the park by arrangements of water, meadow land, and woodlands to form vistas for the enjoyment of visitors who approach the Museum, and also for the pleasure of those who enter the park from the direction of the galleries. Evidently this local adaptation of the landscapes of the park to the Museum should not be carried so far as to create formal compositions appropriate to this edifice but at variance with the continuit- of the naturalistic landscapes which give unity to the Park System. It is also evident that special local compositions of this kind, even though naturalistic in character, cannot be repeated often in the Fens without danger of a loss of unity in the design of the park. With these reservations in mind, the Park Department proposes to create opposite the Museum a landscape composition in harmony with the park and arranged to display the northern portico of the building pleasantly and frankly from the roadways, paths and lagoons. This landscape treatment is to be studied carefully for composition as seen from the building, and from the roadways, paths and stairways which give access to the park opposite the building.

A description of the plan and bird's eye view of this improvement briefly is as follows: The curving park roadway and bridle path which pass the front of the Museum are to be straightened to form lines parallel with the building. Using a portion of the space thus gained, the stream opposite the center of the building is to be widened to form a reflecting pool or lagoon of sufficient size to accommodate boats. The trees which now obscure the Museum from this aspect are to be rearranged to frame the portico of the building as shown. To accommodate pedestrians wishing to cross the path toward Jersey Street, two paths are to be provided, one from the Huntington entrance and the other from the Ruggles Street entrance. Two bridges symmetrically placed,are to be built to carry these footways across the stream at each end of the lagoon. A broad flight of steps also connects this path system with the lagoon and the footways at the Museum entrance. Opposite the stairway a landing platform for boats and a low terrace with a balustrade is to be installed. Beyond the lagoon to the north, a large space of open meadow is to be maintained. This open space is to be flanked by scattered trees and groves, but sufficient openings are to be arranged to give good vistas across the intervening meadows and the water to the portico of the building. Studies of the angles of sight have been made in deciding the location and extent of the pool to insure good reflections of the great colonnade. The east-west path system follows the margins of the composition without detour, and connects the bridges. Plantations of shrubbery and trees are to be set out to give shade for the paths, to form screens, and in general to support the margins of the open spaces. This work has been planned to harmonize with the plan of general development of the Fens as a whole.

Arthur Shurcliff

The Lagoon in the Back Bay Fens designed to compliment the 1915 addition to the Museum of Fine Arts.

The Morton Street Rotary to Franklin Park in August,1981.

THE ZOO

Great importance should be laid upon the point that this special tract devoted to a collection of animals and to the Rose Garden and its adjacent Herbaceous Garden, to the Mall and its terminal colonnade at the Peabody Circle, should not be made a part of the landscape of the great naturalistic "Country Park" which is the controlling composition of Franklin Park. The most precious landscapes of the Park System and of the countryside about Boston are in Franklin Park. There is little chance that these landscapes will be excelled. The Zoo is a unit which must be kept within the topographical and landscape bounds which now define it. If it were allowed to encroach upon the "Country Park" or if amusements which are appropriate to the Zoo were allowed to find a place in the heart of Franklin Park, very serious harm would result. The heavy and high screening plantations which border Glen Lane were deliberately designed to protect the landscape of the "Country Park" from the irrelevant and, therefore, disturbing attractions which were permitted to find a place on the ground now devoted to the Zoo. Similarly, the heavy woods north of the Playstead were maintained at their full height and density to screen from the landscape of the park a collection of native animals which it was thought might find a place upon the ridge among the trees. Fortunately the bounds which frame and screen the Zoo are ample for the accommodation of a thoroughly satisfactory and reasonably extensive collection of animals. There is nothing in the size or contour of the ground or in the location of this tract which can handicap it in becoming one of the most important Zoological Parks of the country, or to justify trespass upon the great "Country Park."

The Zoo is confined to the limits of ground described above, and it uses the border screens of trees which are essential to the "Country Park" as a useful background and shelter plantation. Buildings of low height and quiet color are used in order to present a group of structures as inconspicuous as possible when seen from without. Interior plantations of trees are an important element of the plan of development. They are arranged to reinforce the present boundary screens, to provide shade between and within the enclosures, and to give a sense of space and separation. Trees are to be planted in naturalistic groups except along the Mall, which is an adaptation at less width of the original formal "Greeting," intended to be used as a great entrance esplanade for the accommodation of horse-drawn carriages, riders and pedestrians. The exhibits of animals, birds and flowers are arranged in symmetrical groups where they are associated with the Mall, but elsewhere they are placed in conformity with the rolling and ledgy contour of the ridges and hills. Buildings of picturesque type are used wherever a departure from regular forms has been possible. Temporary buildings for housing deer, elk and bison are built without attempt at picturesque effect, and the simplest materials and methods of construction are used. In erecting permanent structures, the Board has aimed to provide buildings which are best adapted to the health of the animals, and which will give the greatest satisfaction to visitors to the park. It can be said without hesitation that each permanent building thus far erected is the best of its kind in this country and provides shelter for exhibits which are not excelled elsewhere.

A large element in the successful development of the Zoo has resulted from the constant adherence to the general plan of layout which was adopted when the first exhibit (the bear dens) was installed. Improvement of the details of the plan has followed special study devoted to each new acquisition, but the general plan has not been the subject of change. Consequently, the Zoo has taken form rapidly. Public attendance has increased far beyond expectations. The recent development of the elk and deer ranges, the extension of the much needed Mall plantations, and the construction of the Rose Garden have awakened new public interest and enthusiasm for the Zoo. It is hoped that the grading of the Mall can be completed before another season. This improvement will greatly assist in handling the crowds of sightseers, and it will form an important scenic addition to the work already completed.

THE ROSE GARDEN

Over two years ago his Honor Mayor Curley brought to the attention of the Board the growing popularity of rose garden displays in City parks. Near at home, in Springfield and in Hartford, displays of this kind attract great crowds to the parks on Sundays and holidays, and bring flower lovers to these centers from all parts of New England. The time seemed ripe for the creation of a garden of this kind in Boston. After thorough study a satisfactory site was found near the Herbaceous Garden in the Zoo at Franklin Park. General public approval of this project followed, and much interest was shown by the local flower and garden clubs, horticultural societies, and by organizations and cities in the West. Working plans were consequently prepared and the garden has now become an accomplished fact. To save a season's time, the first installation of roses was made in the spring of 1923, as soon as the ground was graded, but before the walks, trellises, fountains and the walls of the garden were built. These structures were partly completed during the following summer, and thousands of visitors evinced their interest by visiting the work to see the roses during the period of construction. The rose arches, the gates, and other details of the garden were finished during the following winter, and the garden was opened in completed form last May. Over seven thousand roses will find a place in the garden. The best roses which can be grown successfully out of doors in this climate will be used. Pillar roses, climbers, standards, dwarf and other types will be grown. Upwards of eighty-four varieties have already been set out.

In form the garden is oval. The central panel is sunken and is approached by four flights of steps. In the center is a circular water basin and fountain. Trellises resting on a curtan wall of concrete, and interrupted by massive concrete piers, form the enclosure of the garden. Upon these trellises and walls, climbing roses are grown. At

the four cardinal points of the oval, attractive concrete niches and arches are built to give points of ascent, and to provide gateways. Permanent construction is used throughout the garden and it cannot fall into ruin through need of repairs in the wooden panels of trellis. Around the garden flowering shrubbery and trees have already been planted.

The general location of the garden is at the westerly end of the lagoon proposed for the future extension of the Herbaceous Garden. Shelter from the wind and a southerly exposure to the sun have been found here on ground which lent itself to the form and the extent of the garden and to the need of well drained soil. A natural background of large trees was also present. The main path system of the Zoo leads to the site, and near it are placed the most important exhibits of the Zoo,including the Bears' Dens, the Bird House and Flying Cage, the Elephant House, the Lion House, and the collections of deer and elk.

It is estimated that the number of visitors to the garden during the season of construction was in the neighborhood of fifty thousand.

THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM OF THE CITY

Report of Arthur A. Shurtleff, Landscape Architect

BOSTON, November 2, 1925

James B. Shea, Esq.,
Chairman, Park Department:

DEAR SIR. - In pursuance of your request I have made during the past two years a study of the Boston Park System in consultation with your Board, to determine the probable future needs of the City for parks, parkways, and playgrounds, and to prepare a plan showing the distribution, size and character of these public open spaces. I have received much valuable information from the Planning Board, the Schoolhouse Commission, and from other City Departments. Information has also been secured from the Metropolitan District Commission and the Metropolitan Planning Division. The accompanying plans and report also include material which has been gathered from the files of your Department, or developed during conferences with your Board and your Engineer. My report embraces the results of much recent field work and the conclusions, recommendations and plans to which the studies have led.

BOSTON PARKS IN 1875 AND IN 1925

The history of Boston during the half century which has elapsed since the first parks were acquired records changes in trasportation, in methods of living and in opportunities for recreation and amusement, which were not foreseen in their entirety when these open spaces were dedicated to public use. These changes are influencing the use, the size and the distribution of parks. The growth of the City,the increase in the number and area of parks, and the changing conditions of park use, are facts of deep interest today as they will be in the future to those who are responsible for the service of the parks to the City. These facts should be recorded. A forecast is needed also of the probable needs of parks based on the changes which have taken place during the past fifty years in the upbuilding of vacant land, the distribution of stores, office buildings and industrial plants, and the changes which still are taking place in transportation and in the types of popular amusement and of recreation. Such a forecast should be of value in determining a plan for the location and the size of future parks and playgrounds. At the present time when the increase of playgrounds is very rapid a guide of this kind especially is needed and could be put to use at once.

EARLY AND LATE DEMANDS FOR PARKS

Half a century ago the need of extensive parks and playgrounds for Boston was questioned. In those days opportunities were at hand for out-of-door recreation in the fields, woodlands, and along the seashores of the near suburbs and in the less used streets and vacant lots of the partly built-up sections of the City. Men who read the times aright predicted that these recreative opportunities, which were made possible largely by sufferance of trespass, would prove inadequate to the public in a few decades and would become intolerable to property owners, and that a well-distributed system of publicly owned parks would become essential to Boston as to the large Old World cities already possessing large park systems. Other men to whom the signs of the times appeared to point in an opposite direction predicted the growth of Boston would be slow, the need for outdoor recreation would become less rather than greater with the improvement of sanitary conditions within homes, schools and industrial establishments, and that unlimited opportunities for recreation beyond the confines of the City would become available through the invention of rapid transit facilities which would eventually supplant the horse-drawn buses, the horse car and the steam-driven locomotives of the railroads. These men thought the then recent invention of the bicycle and the development of pneumatic power vehicles, and even of flying machines, might extend the recreative range of city dwellers and make local parks less necessary. In that era, before the development of electric power for street cars and before the subsequent revolution in transportation brought about by the automobile, predictions of this kind were widely accepted but fortunately these views did not prevail in the program which was inaugurated at that time for an extensive Park System and which led to its acquisition and development.

As time passed, many of the transformations which were predicted have come to pass. Modern sanitation has done even more for homes and for working conditions in the industries than was expected. The flying machine has arrived, and though the bicycle has all but vanished, the automobile is accomplishing almost all that was expected from both, though it has created dangers which were not foreseen. Nevertheless, today the demand for parks and especially for playgrounds is greater than ever before. Labor-saving inventions have increased the demand for public recreation spaces by increasing the free time in which such facilities can be used by the general public. It is true that modern transportation has at length enabled the City dweller to seek pleasure grounds at a distance, but this increase in range has not offset the increasing demand for local parks and playgrounds, though it has created an unexpected demand for large outlying and widely separated County and State Parks.

In fact, the automobile brings into the City in the summer thousands of persons from the country who seek the extensive bathing facilities of the waterfront parks, the interesting attractions of the Zoo and the

Aquarium, the opportunities to watch or to take part in athletic contests and games on well-equipped and properly supervised athletic fields, and to enjoy motor trips through the varied landscapes of the parkways and greater parks. Parks, parkways and playgrounds are intensively used. Their increase has been phenomenal. No defense for their existence or continued extension is asked or made. If it were desired cut down the population growth of Boston, one of the most effective measures which could be adopted to attain that end would be undoubtedly to curtail the extension of parks and playgrounds or to neglect the satisfactory upkeep or administration of such grounds. Fifty years ago the drift of the country populations to the cities was irresistible. The urge of that drift was the seeking of comforts, novelties and gregarious entertainments, and it prevailed in spite of the higher death rates which prevailed sometimes in cities. Today most of those comforts, novelties and amenities are attainable nearly as easily and as cheaply in country districts. Families in the country can have local or private water supplies, supplies of coal, oil, gas, electric power, light, heat, telephone, wireless communication with distant parts of the world, transport of food and other supplies to the door by truck, local good schools, churches and libraries, theatres, regular and frequent mails, opportunities for social and intellectual contact, and local industrial employment of large attracting power. The automobile also enables the country dweller to seek the crowds of the City at short notice when he wishes to join them for a meeting, an entertainment or for a holiday, and to forsake the crowds again at that moment's end.

In other words the small town, the village and the isolated home have become during the past fifty years competitors or near-competitors of the City and not mere feeders of population to the cities. I mention this competition not as an approach to an argument regarding the merit of the City as contrasted with the country or the small town. No agreement can be reached or need be sought on this debatable matter in which personal taste and training are involved. The world would be the poorer if either of these domains prevailed at the expense of the other.

I mention this competition to show that the parks, playgrounds and parkways of a city like Boston must be regarded today in a new light. Fifty years ago their purpose was to give the city dweller recreative escape from the stresses of city life, to make amends for the confinement, darkness, noise and close air of the streets, factory and even of the home by providing opportunities for exercise of play in the open air and for contemplation of natural landscape in areas of large size. Open spaces for recreation were regarded as savers of human life, conservers of vitality, the humanities, and of certain kinds of delight. These functions will always continue to be the large, necessary and compelling purposes for the establishment of parks, and cannot be delegated to other types of recreation like the stage, the concert hall, the museum, or the gymnasium, but a new function has been added or is being added to these. That new

function is the service of the park, playground and parkway when admirably designed and maintained to compete successfully with the natural opportunities for recreation in the open country in and about towns and villages. If a city can meet that competition it need not fear shrinkages of its size or of its invested treasure as far as a backsetting of the tide of population from the country to the city is concerned within the realm of these new forces of change.

For example, if a city can provide very extensive, and excellently administered bathing beaches and other attractive waterfront recreative facilities and aquaria, large areas embracing exceedingly fine woodland, fields and streams composing notable landscapes and having vegetation of marked loveliness and interest, large areas of ground perfectly arranged for athletic sports and games and fully developed for public reception and use, it is highly probably that a very much greater number of men who prefer the country districts would forsake the small community and seek the city to enjoy these facilities if they were easily accessible and could be used with reasonable freedom. On the other hand if these facilities were small, cramped, shabby, or badly administered, I conceive that one of the strongest bonds of the city upon men, women and children would be sundered in these days when excellent transportation facilities are general and when new living conditions make a change of residence either to the individual or to the family a simple matter.

PARK IDEALS IN 1875 AND IN 1925

A study of the Boston Park Reports of the period during which the first land for parks was purchased and methodically planned for recreative use shows that those who were responsible for the design of the parks were governed by certain fundamental beliefs, among which were the following: First, that the cost in money for the land, for the withdrawal of the land from tax-earning uses, for construction, and for maintenance was justifiable on the ground that no other agency than public parks could provide a needed form of recreation. Second, that this recreation could be enjoyed best in large playgrounds and parks from which the sight and the sound of the city could be eliminated by marginal screens of planting, mounds and walls. Third, that one of the most desirable and necessary forms of recreation afforded by parks is the contemplative enjoyment of extensive landscape compositions, especially of a naturalistic kind. These fundamental beliefs crystallized the park ideals of those days and led as well as guided the popular interest and enthusiasm which brought the park systems of Boston and other cities into existence. Frederick Law Olmsted was then the ablest enunciator of these ideals and the most active designer of parks in this country. He became the leader of the Boston Park movement and the designer, with John C. Olmsted, of the system of open spaces which were built.

What is the popular view of these fundamental beliefs of today? The experience of a half century has found no error in the first belief that public parks supply recreative needs which cannot be provided by other means. During these years of change, as I have already noted, a remarkable increase has taken place in the number and size of theatres, exhibition halls, fair grounds, private baseball "parks," private golf courses, race tracks and other indoor and outdoor recreative developments. That the public demand for parks and playgrounds might become less in consequence of the increase of these vast resources of amusement and recreation seemed a likelihood. Quite the opposite has been the fact. As we have seen, the demandsfor additional parks and playgrounds has steadily increased and although large numbers of these installations have been made, the requirements are still unsatisfied. In fact, the requirements have passed the limits of cities and of Metropolitan areas and have brought about the creation of State Parks, an increase of whose number is also constantly urged.

FUTURE PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKWAYS

The need of marginal screens and walls to secure quiet and retirement in parks and playgrounds was never greater than today in this era of noise and danger incident to the increase in volume and speed of street traffic. The extent to which walls can be used around public open spaces is limited, however, by the degree to which supervision and policing can be carried on within grounds thus secluded. Without such oversight, especially at night, boundary screens or interior coverts of all kinds, except in the large parks, are not practical, though quiet and freedom from outside disturbance is greatly needed. In the large parks which are frequented by great numbers of persons and which are therefore open to constant public inspection, the use of border screening plantations of shrubbery and trees, border mounds and walls has been thoroughly practical and forms an even more valuable protection against the noise and distraction of adjacent streets than was foreseen before the revolution in highway transportation came about.

The belief in the value of extensive natural landscapes as an essential element in outdoor recreation has gained ground vastly in the past half century. Popular demand for books, pictures and plays, in which the landscapes of the wilderness of the park and of the private place form the theatre of action, is seemingly insatiable. At the same time the automobile has brought the country-side landscapes and even the wilderness itself within the reach of the City dweller. In fact, the resources of the country are taxed to provide motor vehicles, roads, and camp grounds to meet the requirements of the clerk, the business man and even the farmer in seeking recreation "in the open." Cross-country

"hiking" and golf has become a country-wide activity of week-ends and vacations. Daylight saving has increased the hours available for recreation in the summer season. Naturally enough a demand upon the large city parks for foot trails, motor roads, golf courses and camp sites has sprung up.

Although the landscapes of the great naturalistic parks were never in greater demand than they are today, the scenery, upon which the delight of such recreation depends was never in greater danger of destruction by those who seek them. A half century ago the quiet contemplation of natural scenery by individuals or by families engaged in strolling, picnicking, resting under trees, and moving leisurely about on foot or in slow-moving horse-drawn vehicles, formed the chief active element. Today individuals are less inclined to stroll or to move about quietly on foot. They seek the speed and the rapid change of scene made possible by the motor car and motor cycle. Contemplation of landscape is less deliberate and more often sought as an adjunct to golf or to strenuous "hiking," or "nature study." It can fairly be said at the same time, however, that the public is keener in appreciation of fine scenery and has become severer in the condemnation of inappropriate structures and uses. The individual is strangely unable, however, to appreciate the destruction which he brings about by his own conveyance, his own litter of paper and tin, and by his own noise and unnecessary personal haste.

Franklin Park, the vicinity of Jamaica Pond and the Muddy River Valley were laid out in a naturalistic manner, although with thoroughly subordinate formal incidents, first because the irregularity of the ground and of the boundary lines made that kind of design most direct, appropriate and economical, and second because the "natural" manner was typical of our growing national ideas of park design, although, formal examples of good kinds could be found in this country in the layout of public squares, colleges and the approaches to state buildings. To secure desirable unity in the entire Park System of Boston a continuation of this naturalistic style was made in the Fens, at South Boston, and elsewhere, though with occasional formal incidents. In detached parks and playgrounds the formal manner sometimes dominated when the topography, the boundaries and use, made it desirable.

Everyone who is interested in the design of Franklin Park as a work of art should study the park itself at all seasons of the year and should read the special report upon it by its designer, Frederick Law Olmsted, and published as a City Document in 1886.* A very heavy responsibility rests upon anyone who may propose to modify the design of this park, which was planned after devoted study by the greatest master which our country has produced in the field of landscape architecture.

*"Notes of the Plan of Franklin Park;" available from the Franklin Park Coalition.

In the future shall the naturalistic manner of 1870 be given up and the old parks laid out anew in the formal manner of a new era? Certainly not if the recreativeneeds of that day are fulfilled by the ancient designs. An old fashioned design of excellent type gains in distinction with the passage of years. We no longer destroy excellent portraits, furniture or buildings of early types, but we cherish them rather because they do not conform to the mode of the moment. Public appreciation of good things which are out of date in appearance has increased to an extent which could not have been imagined. To change the existing design of an old park merely to satisfy a new fashion would have no intrinsic reactive merit except to momentary novelty occasioned by the change, and might seriously hurt the continuity of design of the system of parks which is unified almost as much by adherence to a single manner of design as by its curiously irregular physical links. With regard to the layout of future detached playgrounds or parks, however, sufficiently distant from the main chain of the System to bear no design-relation to the chain, a design in any new sensible manner which would meet recreative needs should be welcomed heartily.

It was a principle of good logic and business sense as well as an ideal of fifty years ago which forbade the erection of buildings in parks merely to "decorate" the park or to find a cheap or available site in land already paid for. Except in one or two instances, during this past half century, the public has united against any extraneous building projects upon the Common, Public Garden, the Fens, Franklin Park, or in any part of the Park System. Pleas of emergency, economy, fitness, beauty, have not overcome the wise determination of the public to keep the parks for the recreative purposes which justified the expenditure of money for them and the withdrawal of their land area from taxation. In most other cities the protection of the parks against building operations has been pretty generally successful. As building space in Boston becomes less, demands of this kind will probably continue, but under the present temper of the public mind the parks appear to be reasonably secure. The fact that buildings have been torn down in recent years in the thickly settled regions of Boston to secure space for parks, makes the public doubly skeptical of the business common sense of erecting structures upon park areas. Wholesale demolition of buildings to widen streets and to find sites for modern edifices is one of the familiar sights of the Boston of today, and indeed of all modern American cities. Consequently, the plea so often used in the past that no land other than that of a park is available for a contemplated building project does not carry its former weight.

CHANGES IN LIVING CONDITIONS

Today a large population of the central portion of Boston lives in tenement and apartment houses. More families, consequently, live upon the

land and require larger nearby playgrounds and parks to accommodate them. The wide general home use of prepared foods, use of public laundries, restaurants, and other utilities, tend to reduce the number of household servants, and tend with the transit facilities provided by the automobile and the electric car to make the upbuilding of residence areas exceedingly rapid and to render the individual home smaller, less permanent in location, and to make the dwelling an almost standard commodity which may be leased or bought or sold at short notice. The increasing flexibility of hearthstone ties and almost universal facilities for cheap, individual transportation, have placed the family in a position to move from one part of the city to another, to adopt country or seashore life during the summer season,to make long expeditions to distant parts of the country at any season, and to make rapid changes of employment. These changes in living conditions are not peculiar to Boston. They are taking place over all this country and in Europe. Whether we like these changes or not, theyare one of the salient features of the times. To ignore them in the distribution and layout of parks, and to attempt to provide opportunities and facilities only for those forms of recreation which were in vogue when the parks were established would fail to meet the needs of the hour and the demands of taxpayers. On the other hand to transform our parks instantly to meet all these demands to their full would be equally unwise.

Among other changes of the past half century the following may be noted which have effected the home, places of employment, the schools, the highways, and therefore the parks: General use of electricity for lighting, power, and to some extent for cooking and heating (for both of which gas is also used); general use of the telephone and radio, wider patronage of theatres, picture shows, music and dance halls, indoor skating rinks, museums, the circus, pageants, athletic games and contests; increase in size and number of schools, libraries, churches, hospitals, baths, gymnasia; increased popularity of baseball, football, basketball, tennis, golf, hockey; increased interest in "hiking," long distance touring and camping; increase in out-of-town industrial plants of large size and with excellent equipment; remarkable development of suburban land for housing and country clubs; shortening of working hours, increased wages, and improvement of working conditions, increase of cost of building materials, clothing and food; elimination of the horse traction, the development of the private automobile and truck, the decline of surface trolley cars, the growing use of the motor bus, construction of rapid transit subways and elevated electric lines; radical widening and straightening of streets on an extensive scale, creation of local and State planning boards, development of zoning laws to permit rational control of building height, use and area. This list is by no means complete, but it illustrates the range and the intensity of change. Smoke originating from factories, power plants, locomotives office buildings, dwellings and other sources, prevents the growth of evergreen trees and shrubbery in the parks of the central portions of the City.

Although the horse as a transportation agent upon the park roads and the parkways, which were designed for horse-drawn vehicles, has all but vanished, the number of families and individuals who have at their command privately owned and operated pleasure automobiles is vastly greater than those who formerly used horses. This change has brought a very much heavier traffic burden upon park roads and parkways than could have been foreseen, with the result that radical widenings and reconstruction of these pleasure ways has become necessary both to meet recreative needs and for purposes of safety. Danger resulting from the use of rapidly moving motor vehicles has caused their exclusion from certain park driveways. Large areas of park are devoted to the storage or "parking" of the motor cars of visitors. The number of visitors to the large parkways and parks has increased enormously, in part owing to the use of roadways as mere transportation routes and in part to the increasing use of the parks by out-of-town visitors who frequent the beaches, the local athletic fields, the golf courses and the attractions of the Zoo or the Aquarium.* Rapid transit facilities offered by electric cars upon the streets, elevated railroads and subways has made possible an extraordinary interchange of recreative opportunities across the entire length of the City. A local playground, if it be sufficiently large and well-equipped, like the Christopher J. Lee Playground** for example, attracts patrons from all parts of the City and from all parts of the Metropolitan area, and also from points outside the State.

These radical changes in living conditions have gone hand in hand with an increasing demand for playground facilities for ball playing, baseball, football, tennis, basketball, for children's play fields, for bathing beaches, for ample parkways, for golf courses, and for the "special feature" attractions of the Zoo, the Rose Garden and other exhibits. Changes somewhat parallel are taking place in the parks and parkways of many cities of this country and of Europe. If anything, the changes in Boston are slower than those in other large American cities, partly because theBoston Park System was developed earlier and is less flexible, and partly because we have been unwilling to make hasty changes.

To say that there is less appreciation than was expected twenty-five years ago of the impressive landscapes of the great country park section of Franklin Park, of the meadow and hillside landscapes of the Riverway, and of the woodland interiors of the lower parks, is probably true if the quiet, leisurely contemplation of these compositions by the great mass of visitors is meant. Frequenters of the Boston Parks are an exceedingly "strenuous" part of our population. That these men, women and children do not dwell in a lingering manner upon the loveliness of these park landscapes and pause to contemplate them in the fashion of the Schools of

*Boston's first Aquarium was built in 1912 in Marine Park in South Boston. It was destroyed in the 1950's. An ice skating rink of dubious architectural merit replaced it.

**On M Street in South Boston.

Landscape Painters of three-quarters of a century ago need not trouble us. The contemplations of our day are all necessarily brief and rushing. That is our whole manner of life. The great landscape compositions of our Park System are seen, enjoyed and highly valued. Whenever they have been threatened the popular outcry has been great and it has been compelling. Enthusiasm for golf has made the public a willing spectator of some transformations of the Country Park which ought to be retrieved when other golf courses are provided. Enthusiasm for ball fields has also witnessed injury to the naturalistic landscapes of some of the smaller parks and the reduction in area of adjacent tracts intended for the use of children and girls. There is a growing sentiment for the restoration of these tracts, but at the moment the demands of the young men and boys have been so keenly pressed that the needs of children, girls and elders have been made secondary in some instances. The recent creation of new special playgrounds to meet the latter needs, without accommodations for the larger boys and men, at the Cherry Street, the Morton Street and the Bolton Street Playgrounds, where buildings which covered the entire space have been demolished, indicates both the demand for play space for children and the determination of the City to furnish it even by resorting to drastic methods.

RESULTS OF THESE CHANGES

What bearing have these changes upon Boston's future park and playground system?

First, the demand for public recreation areas having steadily increased through a half century of a most searching kind of change in which full rein has been given to all other competing forms of recreative opportunity, no doubt now remains either with regard to the permanent value of public open spaces or of the importance of placing their development in the front rank of needed public improvements.

Second, playground areas whose space for athletic contests is large are required in greater number to meet the needs of a public which has modern transportation facilities at its command and which shows an increasing interest in viewing spectacular games. Public golf courses are in demand.

Third, a public which is accustomed to the sight of the rapid erection of large buildings, the rapid installation of public service utilities and the wholesale rapid construction of dwellings upon extensive areas of new ground is impatient of slow or piecemeal development of recreative facilities.

Fourth, the extraordinary facility with which domicile for homes can be bought, sold, hired or leased and the ease with which employment is "overturned" has brought into existence a large population always ready to move into or out of residential sections which change character and become attractive or unattractive. For this reason well equipped and well maintained recreative facilities must be regarded as valuable in stabilizing the value of the City of Boston as a residential district in competition with surrounding cities and towns.

Fifth, horse-drawn vehicles have disappeared from the parkways and are replaced by a much greater number of more rapidly-moving motor vehicles which require wider and straighter roadways and road junctions of new forms in order to reduce the number of accidents and to facilitate traffic control. The parkways are unsafe for the use of foot power bicycles, and are less attractive to horseback riders and to pedestrians.

Sixth, the parkways are widely used for long distance inter-city and inter-state motor routes, in part because they are wide, smooth and attractive, and in part because other through routes of good width and smoothness are lacking in the general street system of Boston and surrounding cities and towns. There is a constant demand for extensive widenings of the roadways of the parkways at the expense of grass and tree spaces.

Seventh, on the parkways horse cars have been replaced by trolley cars, and the latter are frequently operated in trains, at high speeds, with few stops, and tend to destroy the grass of the reserve spaces. The automobile bus is making its appearance on some of the parkways.

Eighth, there is an increasing demand for motor parking spaces, motor camp grounds, oiling stations and roadside restaurants.

The above are obvious results. Other results not clearly seen at present may be expected to develop in coming years.

The most convincing argument for local recreation spaces of good size, say seven to ten or more acres as contrasted with spaces of small size, say one to two acres, is found by actual field examination of such small areas and by the opinion expressed by those who depend upon the meagre accommodations.

A playground in a residence district should not present, when seen from without, an expanse of play surfaces and fences so arid and mechanically uninteresting as to hurt the general appearance of the neighborhood. Trees, vine-clad walls, or borders of shrubbery and grass should be arranged to make the exterior of such play spaces attractive.

USE OF THE PARKS FOR SPECIAL GAMES

Although the pastoral landscape areas of Franklin Park were not designed to accommodate golf, this game is now played extensively upon them. In many respects the game is appropriate to this park, and under present control little objection can be made.

When a golf course and the play upon it is subordinate in incident to the landscape, of a public park, objection to the course cannot be sustained against a strong demand for it. On the other hand, if a golf course becomes a most conspicuous element in the scenery through the presence of hazards, bunkers, tees, the play itself, and other features which seize the attention, objection to the course becomes fundamental. A decision must be made, then, either to preserve the landscapes upon which the golf course has intruded, or to regard the former landscapes as an intruding element and yield it to the new game. In making such a decision the following facts should be weighed. I dwell upon them at some length because the relation of the golf course to the design of Franklin Park is typical of other unintended uses which may spring up in the parks and which in the long run may tend to destroy features justifying the construction of such parks and essential to their all around public use.

First, there are places other than Franklin Park in the vicinity of Boston where golf can be played, but there is no other area of public ground in Boston or even in its near vicinity where a landscape as extensive has been designed and brought to a high degree of perfection for the enjoyment of persons who wish to view it from woodlands which surround it or who wish to walk over open areas which are sheltered from distracting objects and brought into an attractive composition by the grouping of trees and border shrubbery in relation to the contour of hills and valleys. Second, this landscape composition was designed to be the most important feature of Franklin Park, and to this composition all the minor landscapes - the Zoo, the service areas, the great Playstead, and the extensive fields for tennis - were carefully subordinated. All the main roadways which connect the parkways on the west at the Arborway with those on the east at Columbia Road through the Park were placed where sight and noise of vehicles would not intrude upon this landscape composition. Third, a golf course has been developed in this landscape composition because the ground could be used without rental or purchase cost and the public could play without club membership or other cost incident to private courses.

The intensive use of this ground for a purpose which was not intended when the Park was designed has come about very gradually and through

the slow development over a term of years of a game whose ultimate requirements were not foreseen. In the beginning the game appeared to be one which would be played chiefly by those who sought this landscape for the very kind of enjoyment it was intended to provide and under conditions which would not modify the landscape itself. If the requirements of the game develop to a point where they are at variance with the design of the Park, the course should either be given up or it should be modified to become once more a subordinate element in the landscape even at the sacrifice of some of the interest of the game which can be played upon it. It is to be hoped that the game can be continued in the Park under conditions which are satisfactory to the integrity of these impressive landscape compositions.

The popularity of golf is so great, and the present capacity of the course at Franklin Park is so heavily taxed, that additional accommodations for the enjoyment of the game ought to be found upon public ground. The terrain required for the game is appropriate to the ground of a park system. Other cities are laying out municipal golf courses in liberal number. Land of sufficient extent is available for purchase and development for golf near Boston.

CHANGES ALREADY MADE IN THE PARK SYSTEM TO ACCOMMODATE TRAFFIC

Considerations of public safety and convenience have required the following changes in the Park System during the past ten years to meet the requirements of motor vehicle traffic.

1. The straightening of Commonwealth Avenue, between Massachusetts Avenue and Governor Square, and the construction of a double-barreled roadway throughout.

2. The straightening of the Westland Avenue entrance to the Fens and the creation of a circle for the gyratory handling of traffic.

3. The straightening of Morton Street at the easterly end of the Arborway to enable the latter parkway to function as a through motor route rather than as an entrance primarily for Franklin Park.

4. The widening and straightening of the Circuit Road of Franklin Park to provide a width of 40 feet and to eliminate some of the sharper curves. This work has been completed within the past two months.

5. The widening and straightening of Glen Lane at the easterly side of Franklin Park for the accommodation of trucks. Work partly completed.

The Rose Garden in September, 1925.

The Golf Course from Future Parks, Playgrounds and Parkways, 1925. This picture was taken before the course was enlarged to eighteen holes in 1922; note the construction on the left.

The Blue Hill Avenue Entrance Rotary - named in honor of Robert S. Peabody, architect and Park Commissioner - photo taken in August, 1981.

6. Straightening of some of the roads of the Jamaicaway at the southerly end of Jamaica Pond to permit better functioning of the double roadways of the Arborway.

7. Widening of roadway along the notherly edge of Jamaica Pond to accommodate motor vehicles. Also widening Riverway to Brookline Avenue.

8. Elimination of vehicles from The Mall of Franklin Park, being a departure from the original scheme for The Greeting, which was intended to accommodate horse-drawn vehicles.

9. The construction of a large circle to assist traffic control at the westerly end of Beacon Street in pursuance of plans made nearly half a century ago but not executed until recently.

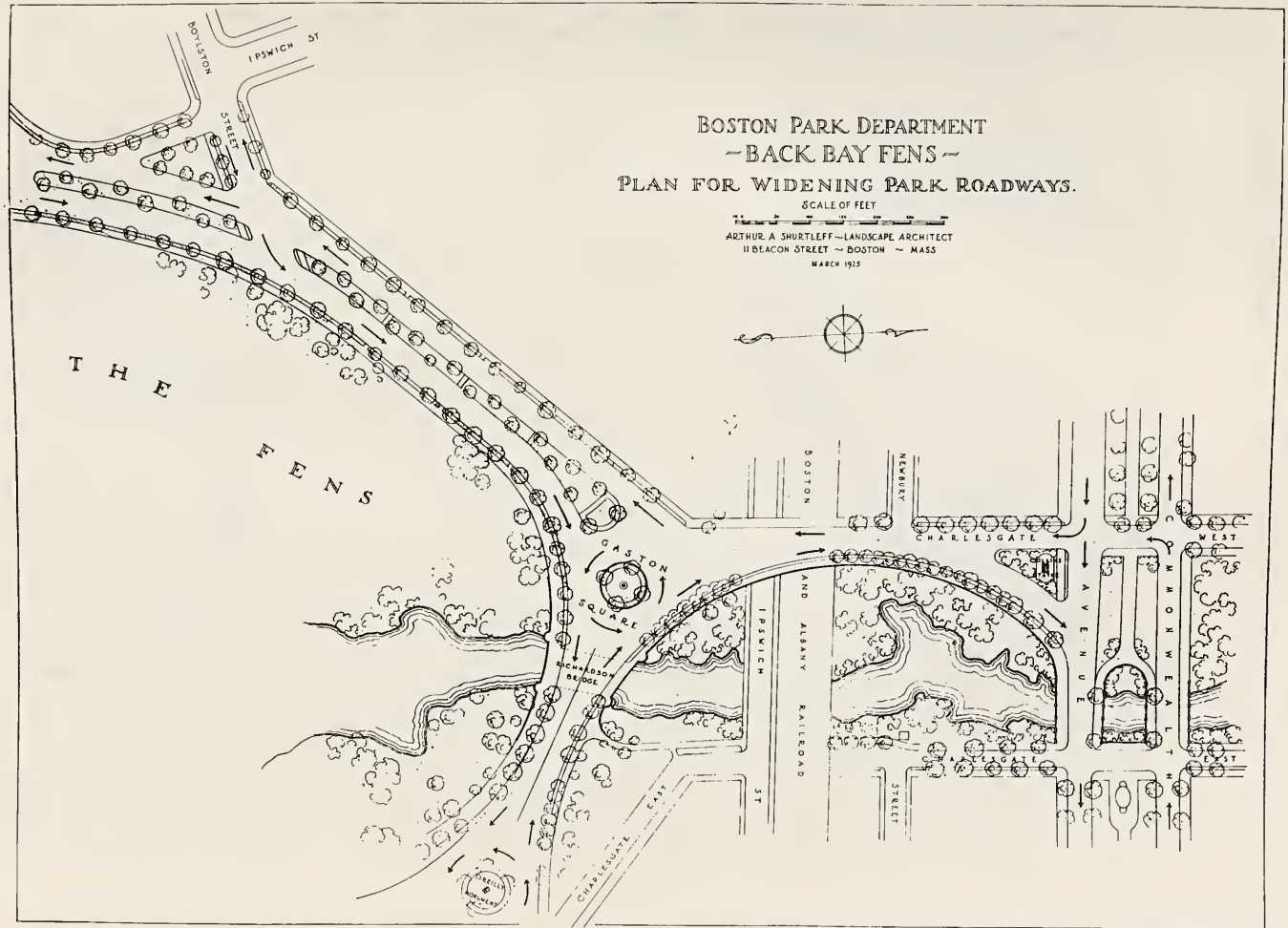
10. The construction of a large traffic circle at South Boston at the junction of Columbia Road and the Old Colony Boulevard to assist in traffic control.

11. Provision of special parking spaces for motors at many of the parks, including World War Memorial Park at East Boston, Columbus Park at South Boston, Peabody Circle in Franklin Park and elsewhere.

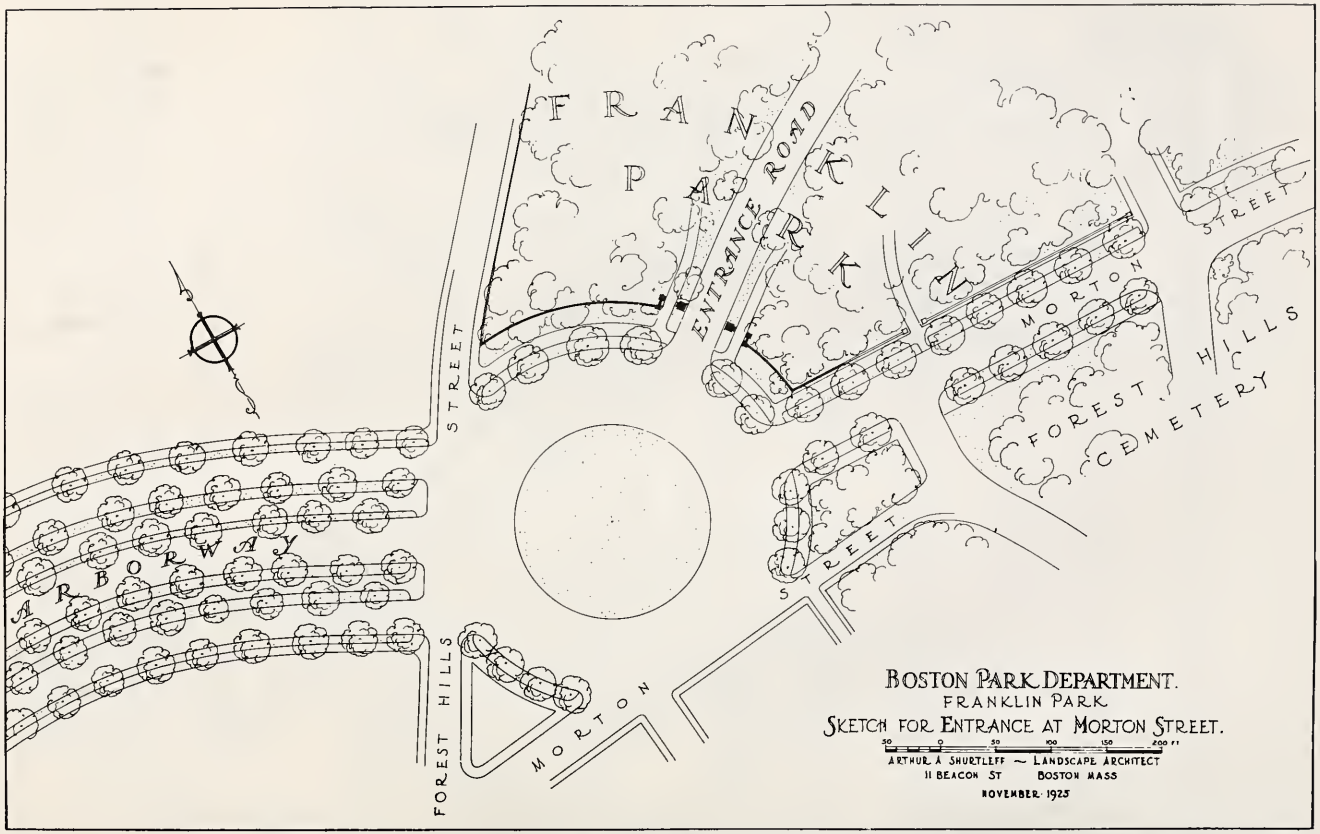
12. To the above should be added the rounding of street corners adjacent to parks, the widening of streets adjacent to parks by the reduction in width of sidewalks as in the case of Charles Street between the Common and the Public Garden, the improvement of visibility conditions at street corners, the elimination of shrubbery plantations alongside curving park roads where public safety requires a clear view of traffic, and the erection of signs and other directional material, and the use of white paint to mark crossings, curbings and other lines requiring special attention on the part of operators of motor vehicles. Under the rapid increase in the number of motor vehicles and the need of greater public safety, many other changes will undoubtedly be required which cannot be foreseen at the present time. At the moment the use of exceedingly conspicuous directional signs and roadway markings appears to be necessary, although these features hurt the appearance of the park roads.

THE PARKWAYS OF THE PARK SYSTEM

The relation of the parkways of the Boston Park System to the larger parks and to the playgrounds, as well as to the great park areas and parkways of the Metropolitan System is shown on the small scale plan between page 2 and 3 and also on the plan on page 45 to a larger scale. The relation of these parkways to main thoroughfares is also indicated, and letters are entered on the plan for convenient reference.



PLAN FOR STRAIGHTENING AND WIDENING CURVING PARK ROADWAYS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE FENS AND CREATION OF TRAFFIC CIRCLES AND DOUBLE BARRELED ROADWAYS WITH INTERVENING GRASS SPACES FOR TREES. THE FILLING OPERATIONS FOR THE SUBGRADE OF THIS IMPROVEMENT HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT.



PROPOSED CIRCLE AT ARBORWAY ENTRANCE TO FRANKLIN PARK ARRANGED TO PROVIDE SAFER AND MORE ATTRACTIVE ENTRANCE TO THE PARK AND TO DISTRIBUTE THE TRAFFIC OF MORTON STREET AMONG NEIGHBORING TRAFFIC STREETS.

What determined the arrangement of the width of the parkways of the Park System when they were laid down? They were arranged to connect centres of population with the large parks. They were also intended to enhance the recreative efficiency of the parks by extending their zones of influence. Subsequently parkways were arranged to connect Franklin Park with the ocean beaches at South Boston by means of Columbia Road, and with the Muddy Pond Reservation by means of the West Roxbury Parkway. Another group of parkways or park-like roads, Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue extensions, were built for other than strictly park purposes and formed arterial thoroughfares leading into the suburbs. The width of the first series of parkways was made more than sufficient to accommodate horse-drawn vehicles and sidewalks, in order to include generous space for trees, waterways and lawns. Space for these landscape features was considered essential. The City spent its treasure liberally to buy land and to develop it for such landscape effects. The moneys spent for the landscape elements of the parkways over and above the cost of the mere smooth roadways brought a return in attractiveness and distinction which has made Boston's parkways famous over this country.

What promises in the future to determine the arrangement and the width of the parkways of Boston? Whether we relish it or not, the requirements of motor vehicle traffic are tending to cut down the landscape elements of the parkways by widenings, straightenings and double-barreling of the roadways at the expense of ground which was considered essential for grass areas, trees and shrubbery. Initial widenings and straightenings have become necessary on account of the greater width and speed of motor vehicles more or less independently of the volume of traffic. Subsequent widenings will probably be required to accommodate volume. This volume will arise not from a demand for park-approach facilities, but to secure road space, because the local highways of the City and the suburbs are so narrow and so poorly connected that they cannot be used for convenient through routes. Naturally enough, complaint is made of the parkway capacities, although projects are put on foot at the same time to bring still larger volumes of traffic into them by linking them with the main thoroughfares and with the Metropolitan parkways. In the meantime progress is being made with plans for the connection of the faulty alignment both of local highways of the City by the Boston Planning Board and of the Metropolitan District and by the State authorities. Evidently, however, there is danger that the more expensive local street improvement projects will be postponed until the development of the parkways for motor use is either carried to a point where all their width will be devoted to road surfaces for the accommodation of vehicles or to a point which will arouse public protest against the destruction of the grass spaces, shrubbery masses and the trees which were regarded in the beginning as essential to the attractiveness of these ways. The temptation to allow the development of the roadways of the parkways to proceed too far will become very great as a matter of immediate relief and of instant economy, but sooner of later the City and the State will be forced to link together and to widen the highways which are responsible for a great part of this congestion, at least to a point where the destruction of the parkways as pleasure routes and as necessary adornments of the City can be stopped.

To regard the parkways as routes whose pleasant appearance and decorative effect are essential to the welfare of Boston is not an extreme view. Boston has possessed no other one feature which has occasioned so much favorable comment from visitors or which has been so widely copied by other cities of the country. To permit these parkways to be seriously injured during this epoch of the revolution of vehicular transportation could only be justified upon grounds of a vast gain in some other field. At the moment the only gain in sight would be a postponement of the cost of undertaking the long contemplated improvement of the highway system as a whole, which is urgently needed for every reason quite apart from its bearing upon the over-use of parkways. Certainly a postponement of these costs to the State and to the City could not justify an injury of vast magnitude to the Park System. Injury of this kind would mean more than a reduction of attractiveness of the parkways themselves. It would mean an injury to the attractiveness of the City as a whole and a consequent reduction in the value and the earning power of all the treasure which has been invested in the City as a residence district. In passing to a discussion of desirable future extensions of the parkways, I make the assumption, therefore, from the foregoing, that such extensions can neither take the place of general highway improvements of the City, nor can be recommended unless those highway improvements are assured.

The great U-shaped system of main parkways is provided with a convenient group of highways which lead from "B" at the Fens by way of Westland Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue to Columbia Road at the point "F." The northerly branch through Southampton Street to "G" in Columbus Park needs the improvement of Preble Street, as shown on the recent plans of the Planning Board.

Reference to the plan indicates the need of better connection between the point "A" in the heart of the City and the point "H" on the South Boston waterfront. The proposal to extend Summer Street by a widening of L Street would render the park facilities at South Boston more useful. At the opposite end of Summer Street, in the neighborhood of Dewey Square, the proposal of the Planning Board to construct an intermediate thoroughfare approximately as shown by the dotted lines would assist in uniting the extreme northeasterly sections of the City and also Old Boston with Summer Street and consequently with South Boston. The construction of the Metropolitan Old Colony Parkway from "G" along the margin of Dorchester Bay toward "J" and thence souteast toward Quincy will make the parkway facilities of the City of greater use to long distance motor vehicle travel. The westerly extension of the parkway system from the Fens at "B" through Commonwealth Avenue to Chestnut Hill Reservoir by the line "S R Q" forms an important link in one of the main westerly arteries of the City which leads via the Newton Boulevard to Auburndale Bridge.

The northerly lead of the West Roxbury Parkway from the Stony Brook Reservation to Weld Street, if extended from "O," as proposed by the Town of Brookline, toward Hammond's Pond and thence northwest to a termination in the Charles River Valley, is desirable.

The wide highway connection proposed by the Planning Board of Brookline connecting the vicinity of Jamaica Pond at "C" with Beacon Street at Cleveland Circle near the point "Q" will provide a useful connection between the Brighton district and the waterfront at South Boston.

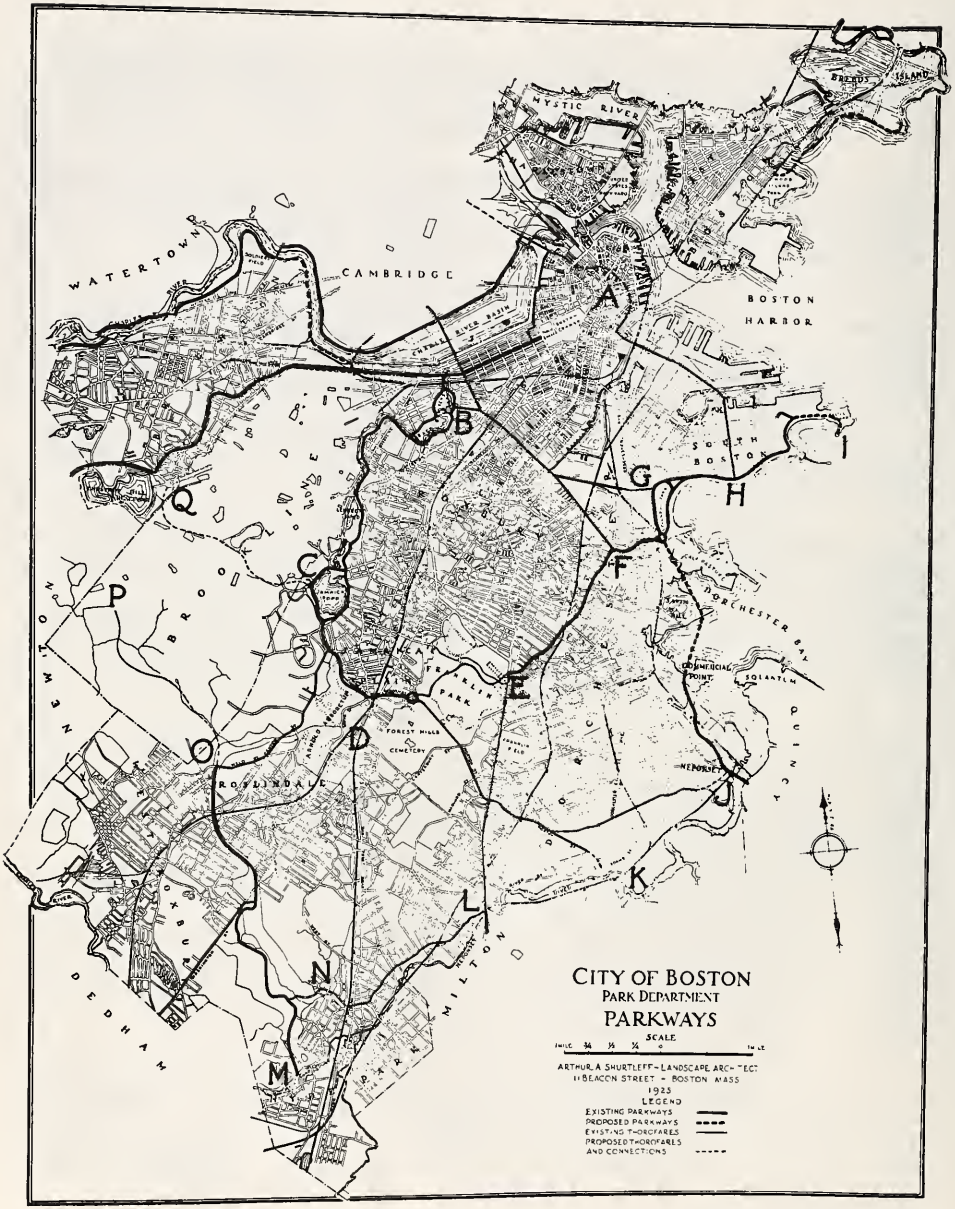
An east-west connection between the Stony Brook Reservation at "N" and the vicinity of Mattapan Square at "L" by the suggested improvement of River Street would be of value to residents of Hyde Park and West Roxbury wishing to proceed either by way of Blue Hill Avenue or by way of the Neponset River Valley to the waterfront facilities at City Point.

The proposal of the State Highway Commission to provide an east-west connection from Morton Street by way of Codman Street to Neponset is also desirable.

In East Boston, Bennington Street in combination with Neptune Road serves as a convenient approach to Wood Island Park, though these two highways are not under the jurisdiction of the Park Department. The proposal to connect Wood Island Park (World War Memorial Park) with a park-like waterfront street extending northeast to the existing Metropolitan Park land on Breed's Island would unite Neptune Road, Wood Island Park and the Winthrop shore to form an attractive local chain of parks.

The general relation of the parkways of the City of Boston to those of the Commonwealth are shown on the plan, between pages 44 and 45. Although these ways were intended for the accommodation of pleasure vehicles making short excursions to the parks either from Boston or from the surrounding towns, these arteries are being used today to an increasing degree by long distance motors passing from the southern portion of the State or from Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York State northwards into New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. So much traffic is being led to these arteries that they are becoming rapidly overcrowded and the attention of the Planning Boards of the City and surrounding towns, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Division, is being turned to the development of long distance highways, especially of a circumferential alignment, which should distribute traffic and prevent undue concentration on the parkways.

To what degree the traffic of the parkways at the east and west of Franklin Park should be encouraged to use the Circuit Road, recently opened, is a matter which experience can alone determine. A separation of roads at points of crossing by means of underpasses similar to those which have been carried out in Central Park, New York, may become necessary, notably in the vicinity of the Valley Gate and at the crossing with Glen Lane near Peabody Circle.


CITY OF BOSTON
PARK DEPARTMENT
PARKWAYS
SCALE
1 MILE ¾ ½ ¼ 0 1 MILE
ARTHUR A SHURTLEFF - LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
11 BEACON STREET - BOSTON MASS
1925
LEGEND
EXISTING PARKWAYS
PROPOSED PARKWAYS
EXISTING THOROFARES
PROPOSED THOROFARES AND CONNECTIONS
MYSTIC RIVER
BREEDS ISLAND
WATERTOWN
CAMBRIDGE
BOSTON HARBOR
SOUTH BOSTON
DORCHESTER BAY
COMMERCIAL POINT
SQUANTUM
NEPONSET
QUINCY
FRANKLIN PARK
FOREST HILLS CEMETERY
ROSLINDALE
NEWTON
DEDHAM
MILTON
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q

Other separation of grades will doubtless be needed in time on the main parkways at points of intersection like those at Longwood Avenue, Brookline Avenue, and at Columbia Road - Old Colony Avenue junction. These are problems which cannot be foreseen in their entirety while the present rapid changes in traffic conditions are taking place and before the better co-ordination of the main highways of the district has been effected through the activities of the Planning Boards of the cities and towns of the Commonwealth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If there were no system in the grouping of Boston parks, or if the parks individually were unable to meet the ordinary requirements of recreation under the changes of recent years, the report which ought to be made with regard to the parks could not fail to include recommendations of a striking kind, involving much expense for their accomplishment. If such were the state of the parks the changes and the expense involved in such recommendations conceivably might be as striking as some of those which are entailed in the reports of sensible men for the improvement of the ordinary street system of the City to-day to meet the needs of vehicular traffic. It is regrettable in one respect that the requirements of the parks are not striking in such a sense, for there is danger that very pressing needs may not awaken and hold the public attention which they deserve and which the continued prosperity of the City requires. The methodical planning of the Boston Park System during the past half century, by continuing groups of able men who have been singularly clear sighted in providing both for the recreation needs of their own day and for the expectable needs for the future, is responsible for the fact that recommendations of a drastic kind involving great immediate expenditure comparable with the sums which are required to correct the layout of public streets are not required to-day.

The work of these men places a responsibility of another kind upon their successors. It is the responsibility of carrying through and extending work which was well planned in the beginning and which has been on the whole well directed for half a century. To protect this older fabric from injury while changing it as little as need be to meet new conditions and at the same time to make new fabric of like weave where it is needed by a new era, is a part of this work. Recommendations for the continuance of such established work must be striking, however, if they reflect the singular urge of our own times toward an escape from the confinement of city life at a period when city-building itself never went forward so enthusiastically or built so compactly, so high and so wide. The cost involved is also great either to foolow with too absolute step or to fall too far behind the pace which the public is setting to-day in response to this urge for the establishment of new parks, playgrounds and parkways, and for the use of existing recreation areas to a point of intensity which taxes their integrity.

I make the following recommendations based on the material of the report:

1. Ground for playgrounds and parks should be secured at an early day in the sparsely settled section of the City which have been described and shown on the plans while opportunity remains to select well situated areas of sufficient size, satisfactory contour and soil, having good trees, located if possible near schools, but distant from dangerous motor routes.

2. The above open spaces should be sufficiently large to accommodate combined park and playground facilities, including ball fields for boys and men, play fields for children and girls, field houses, shelters and apparatus, and also park space planted with trees, lawns and shrubbery for the use of older persons.

3. The distance between these recreation areas should be determined by the distance-radius areas described in the report.

4. In the more thickly settled parts of the City where parks and playgrounds are lacking they should be provided where needed and their size and development should be made to conform as fully as possible to the requirements specified in the three recommendations above.

5. In sections of the City where present parks and playgrounds are too small to meet the requirements of men and boys, women and girls, and of older persons, additions should be made preferably by acquiring more space adjacent to the present areas, but if this is not possible, by the interpolation of new recreation areas designed to meet the special recreative requirements of that neighborhood.

6. In sections of the City where playground areas are required for ball fields or athletic grounds for men and boys, these should not be secured by the absorption of parks which are needed by children or girls or by elder persons or which if used for ball fields would injure the appearance of the Park System or of the locality.

7. The extensive landscapes of the larger parks should be protected by the mainenance or the provisionof marginal screens of foliage, mounds, or walls, for the purposes described in the report, and should also be protected against the encroachments of uses, structures, or planting at variance with the landscape composition of these parks.

8. Golf or other field games which are played upon the open ground embracing the central landscape compositions of the larger parks should not be permitted to mark the ground with lines of play, hazards, bunkers, trees, backnets, or other features or structures to such an extent that the appearance of the landscapes becomes marred or to such a degree that the use of these grounds for the enjoyment of the landscape becomes unreasonably interrupted or involved with danger.

9. Land should be acquired for golf courses or for other field games whose accommodation upon existing park areas would endanger the attractiveness of such areas, and whose continued popularity is reasonably assured.

10. The interior roadways of the large parks should be developed for the use of motor vehicles, but not beyond limits which would jeopardize the value of the park for general recreative use or interfere with the enjoyment of its landscapes by the distractions of the sight of moving vehicles and by noise.

11. The parkways of the Park System should be developed for the use of motor vehicles, but not to a degree which would make them dangerous for pleasure use or to an extent which would mar their appearance.

12. Undue use of the interior Park roads or the Parkways by motor vehicles as an expedient to avoid the cost of construction of adequate general highways for the accommodation of the traffic of the City or of adjacent towns or cities or of the Metropolitan District should not be permitted.

13. The Parkway connections and extensions advocated in the report should be carried out if the demands of traffic continue to increase.

14. The "naturalistic manner" in which the Park System was laid out and which gives desirable unity of design to the System as a whole should not be abandoned in any of the parks forming the main chain of the System.

15. Variety in the design of the scattered playgrounds and small parks of the City should be sought both to prevent undesirable standardization, and to secure the full recreational value of local individualities of site, exposure, contour of the ground, and local requirements of use.

16. To prove as far as may be a depreciation of the treasure which is invested in the City as a place of residence, and to secure the greatest returns in inspiration and in ordinary recreation which the Park System can yield, the playgrounds and parkways in all parts of the City should be maintained in a high state of upkeep, free from appearance of shabbiness or neglect. The parks should receive equally good care, but the upkeep of their landscapes should not be made a mechanical routine which would impair the natural appearance or the intricacy and attractiveness of their foliage compositions.

Respectfully submitted,

ARTHUR A. SHURTLEFF, Landscape Architect.

11 Beacon Street, Boston.

7797 29